PRACTICE

Wobble and Transcending the Challenges of Novice Teachers

Timothy Jansky: Assistant Professor / Eastern Kentucky University
Trevor Thomas Stewart: Associate Professor / Virginia Tech

Abstract

This paper explores a novice teacher's experiences and challenges in order to discuss the importance of supporting new teachers. We examine the new identity that novice teachers take on as they enter the workforce, requiring them to bring two competing worlds into dialogue with one another. By highlighting the moments of struggle and uncertainty that one new teacher encountered, the paper calls attention to the need to support new teachers and help them transcend the persistent problem of isolation in the teaching profession. This article identifies how teacher educators can help prepare teacher candidates and novice teachers to respond to challenges.

Keywords: wobble, teacher induction, dialogic pedagogy, standardization

Introduction

The transition from teacher candidate (TC) can be exciting yet daunting. The joy of getting that first "real" job is often quickly replaced by the realization that there is still much to learn about being a teacher. Planning without the support of professors or a cooperating teacher, developing relationships with students and fellow teachers, establishing classroom routines, and developing a comfort level with the curriculum in a new school are just some things to be reckoned with during those first uncertain months. Moreover, the learning curve for each new teacher is different because they will each enter a different context (Smagorinsky, 2018). Just as all schools have a different feel, tenor, and culture, individual classrooms are shaped by the myriad personalities and lived experiences of the teachers and students who walk into them each morning.

The TCs we have worked with over the years have expressed, and rightly so, the hope that their teacher preparation programs have provided them with the tools to adapt and thrive as they move to the other side of the desk. However, steady and troubling teacher attrition rates (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Stewart et al., 2019) suggest that much work must still be done to support novice teachers. Teacher educators and school administrators must find ways to ease this transition and put systems in place that thoughtfully address the problem of isolation that has historically plagued the profession (Lortie, 1975). If teachers are, as it is so often argued, the most crucial element in student success, it makes little sense to continue to allow novice teachers to work in isolation, expect them to hide their struggles, and act as though they enter the classroom as fully formed professionals who can overcome their challenges by faking it until they make it.

This article seeks to generate ideas about how those who care about teaching and teacher education might better support novice teachers navigating the tensions they encounter in contemporary classrooms. In particular, we examine the challenges shared by Grant (all names are

pseudonyms), a first-year teacher, to highlight the importance of embracing struggle and developing dialogical relationships with students. There is a long tradition within teacher education of engaging students by focusing on relationship-building. However, relationships between teachers and students can also be a key source of growth and a valuable tool to help novice teachers respond to uncertainty and isolation (Stewart & Boggs, 2019). To that end, we focus on Grant's experiences to explore how a novice teacher responded to the challenges he encountered when he felt isolated from his colleagues.

Like so many novice teachers, Grant struggled under the weight of isolation and the challenges that arise when seeking to bridge two different worlds (Smagorinsky et al., 2008)—the theoretical world of teacher education that places a high value on preparing teachers to develop and exercise agency, and the world of contemporary schools where teacher-agency is being curtailed by standardized curriculum (Au, 2011; Stewart et al., 2020). Often, novice teachers find themselves in school contexts that seem to reject or minimize the value of the theoretical knowledge that is foundational in learning to teach (Smagorinsky et al., 2013). Pressures to conform to the scripted world of schools begin in teacher education programs and continue into full-time teaching (Fecho et al., 2020).

When novice teachers feel compelled to conform their practices to contemporary schools' authoritative and standardized world, they often struggle to work through these tensions alone (Stewart et al., 2020). Professors and university supervisors serve as key resources for TCs in teacher education programs. However, after graduation, they are often left searching for someone to speak with about their struggles. Grant gave voice to this persistent and troubling issue during an interview with Author A, in which he shared a frustrating moment three months into his first year when he asked an experienced teacher in his department for advice about implementing the school's curriculum. The teacher assumed that Grant was administering specific content-related assessments and implementing thematically designed units of study and said, “Oh yeah, you should have been doing this.” Grant was offered no further guidance about how he should do these things. Novice teacher induction ought to apprentice new teachers into the discourses of the school and department. When this apprenticeship fails to address or, worse yet, is the cause of tensions that arise when learning to teach, it can exacerbate the problem of isolation. So, when tensions arise, to whom can a teacher in this context turn, and how does the teacher reconcile these tensions?

We respond to that question by turning to the concept of *Wobble* (Fecho, 2011), which sees moments of struggle as sources of growth. Grant’s experiences provide a touchstone for examining the value of uncertainty and the importance of helping new teachers embrace and explore moments of struggle instead of simply pushing doubt aside and attempting to fake it until one makes it. We suggest that embracing wobble to examine the underlying tension and developing dialogical relationships with students can help novice teachers respond to the uncertainty and frustration they encounter as they step into their new roles in the classroom. Of particular concern is the immense pressure that novice teachers face to conform their identities and practices to the norms of the school or department (Buchanan, 2015; Costigan, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Contemporary educational reforms, driven by legislation created without meaningful teacher input (e.g., Race to the Top), often put teachers in the position of carrying out directives without regard to whether or not they agree with them. These reforms, which seek to standardize ways of thinking and teaching, function as an authoritative discourse (Bakhtin, 1981), undermining the development of new ideas. Authoritative discourse removes the opportunity to transform live speech into new meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). Grant's experiences provided an opportunity to explore what happens when a novice teacher cannot bring the authoritative discourse of standardization into dialogue because he lacked the kind of support network he needed to reconcile the tension between his own pedagogical beliefs and the norms in his school. We draw upon Bakhtin's (1981) theory of language to make sense of these tensions and posit ways to respond to them that support novice teachers.

Bakhtin (1981) argued that there are always competing forces at work—centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (disunifying) forces—when meaning is made. The centripetal forces of language support authoritative discourses that must be totally affirmed or totally rejected. For example, a school's pacing guide and testing schedule are a privileged discourse that is, too often, beyond question. Teachers seeking to deviate from a pacing guide attempt to draw the authoritative discourse into dialogue. Here, we see two centers of gravity at odds with one another.

Reconciling the tensions created by competing centers of gravity (Smagorinsky et al., 2013) is already challenging for experienced teachers, despite their established reputations; novice teachers are in particular need of support because they risk much when they push back against discourses that grind against their own pedagogical beliefs (Stewart et al., 2020). They risk even more when they admit they are struggling because their contracts for the next year are anything but assured. An unhealthy tension between these centers of gravity creates *a wobble.* Fecho et al. (2005) used *wobble* to describe an awareness of when things are imbalanced, such as when theory and practice seem to contradict one another (Stewart et al., 2020). Noticing and understanding wobble requires pausing, reflecting, and responding, even during moments of discomfort (Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; Guggenheim, 2019).

Researchers applying the concept of wobble to novice teachers' experiences point to the importance of the dialogical process of reflecting and responding through personal writing or through discussions with colleagues, peers, or university supervisors and the possibilities of changes such dialogue creates (Fecho et al., 2005; Guggenheim, 2019). Dialogue is a "key step in managing the tension created by competing centers of gravity" (Stewart et al., 2020, p. 54). Dragging authoritative discourse into a contact zone where it becomes internally persuasive discourse can facilitate new meaning, new materials, new situations, and new answers (Bakhtin, 1981; Stewart et al., 2020). Such dialogue is effective in helping novice teachers develop strategies to learn from tension (Fecho et al., 2020; Rogers & Babinsky, 2002; Stewart & Jansky, 2022).

These studies clarify that the co-construction of knowledge and further development of reflective, dialogical practices is a beneficial outcome of collaborative learning communities and a resource for teachers when faced with tension and wobble. In the absence of colleagues or peers with whom a teacher experiencing wobble can dialogue, students can provide needed perspectives (Stewart & McClure, 2013).

Methods

This paper draws on narrative accounts from Grant, a first-year English teacher at Park City High School (PCHS), a medium-sized urban high school in the Midwest. Grant participated in a more extensive study that sought insights into how relationships and experiences shape novice teachers' conceptions of self as a teacher and learner. The more extensive study drew upon the tradition of narrative inquiry to understand participants' experiences as situated "in relationships and in communities, and it attends to notions of expertise and knowing in relational and participatory ways" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). Stories are not simply told; they are lived. Stories are dynamic, with each telling breathing revealing more about the context in which the story unfolds. In this sense, stories occupy both the past and present. However, as Ochs and Capps (2001) argued, people narrate with a look toward the future. The multidimensional nature of narrative provides a landscape of data that can be used to explore experiences and struggles.

By analyzing Grant's experiences, we unpack and explore how he responded to moments of uncertainty (or wobble) and the feelings of isolation that defined his first year as a teacher. Grant's pathway to becoming a public school teacher was unconventional, but his experiences and struggles were typical for first-year teachers in that he struggled with standardization, classroom management, and instructional planning.

Data Generation

Data were generated in three phases over seven months, spanning parts of two academic semesters. Phase one involved two semi-structured interviews to collect a narrative. These interviews discussed participants' experiences as a student, a TC, and a novice teacher, including influences and mentors in teaching, ideological positions on numerous topics in education and reforms, pedagogical practices, professional development, and how they saw their future as teachers. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The second phase of data generation was classroom/school observations. Observations were conducted twice weekly for approximately three hours per week over four months of one academic semester. Author A wrote field notes, which were transcribed to create narrative accounts of the observations. Phase three of data generation was a final semi-structured interview that discussed topics specific to the data generated and analyzed for each teacher. In each phase, data were viewed from a narrative perspective: Participants' experiences were seen as stories where meaning could be extracted (Stewart, 2011).

Data Analysis

The initial thematic (Maxwell, 2005) data analysis focused on how participants responded to the challenges they encountered. Through this analysis, we generated the following codes (See Figure 1 below) to index and categorize participants' responses about their communities, notions of expertise, and ways of participating in the teaching community.

Table 1. Codes and Definitions

Code	**Definition**
Agency	Applied to statements indexing thoughts of things being amiss and/or feeling as though one's ability to affect change is limited due to a lack of audience for dialogue.
Justifying	Applied to statements that indexed efforts to explain actions in response to moments of tension and uncertainty.
Negotiating	Applied to statements that indexed efforts to engage in dialogue or dialogic transactions.

Data were then further sifted using the sub-codes (see Figure 2 below) we generated from common themes we saw as we transacted with the data (Stewart, 2011). The sub-codes captured potential sources of tension underlying these challenges, the context in which they occurred, and the characteristics of the participants' responses.

Table 2. Sub-codes and Definitions

Sub-Codes	Definitions
Students	Applied to statements that indexed responses to concerns about students and student learning.
Colleagues	Applied to statements that indexed responses to concerns about relations with colleagues and their perceptions of the participant.
Self	Applied to statements that indexed moments of self-reflection in terms of development as a teacher and/or a colleague.
Curriculum	Applied to statements that indexed responses to the required curriculum.

In the following section, we draw upon the data to articulate how embracing wobble and developing dialogical relationships with students can support novice teachers through moments of struggle.

Findings/Understandings

The challenges that Grant faced as a novice teacher mirror those encountered by many new teachers who have struggled to navigate the discourses of power flowing from standardization, put theory into practice (Smagorinsky et al., 2013; Stewart et al., 2020) and see their flaws and moments of wobble as productive (Fecho, 2011; Stewart et al., 2019). Grant's experiences call special attention to the problems of support being absent. He noted that he felt he was left to make sense of the rules of curriculum, department norms, and expectations with little help from others. In the third interview, Grant lamented how he was not regularly part of planning meetings, saying, "I don't know if I was ever given the opportunity to be a team player." Here, the *agency* code was applied to index a statement in which Grant responded to the absence of a chance to engage in dialogue with colleagues. Grant told Author A that he wanted to be part of planning meetings, but being left out caused him to wonder and question how best to plan, teach, and generally act as a teacher. He mentioned that lack of clear communication caused him tension, which we coded as *justifying* when he said, “I just wasn’t told…the expectations were not communicated to me". In interview three, he explained that this tension could have been alleviated if he had been included in planning meetings or had not received "wishy-washy answers" when "there were exact answers." The frustration of not knowing if what he was doing was what was expected of him wore on Grant.

When Grant needed support, the advice from his peers conflicted with what he thought was best for him and his students. Grant faced pressure to get the curriculum and units he taught "right" according to the department's norms. Grant told Author A that peers have questioned him about his choice not to give multiple-choice summative assessments, to which he felt the need to explain further, which we coded *justifying* versus his perception of *colleagues'* expectations. He said, "So it's made me question what I was doing, but I think the results that I'm getting show what I'm doing is effective." This tension was exacerbated when he doubted his ability to teach the required content and needed peers with whom he felt comfortable sharing his challenges. Grant's struggles underscore how important it is to consider the needs of new teachers who may not have developed relationships with colleagues that allow them to discuss their fears and doubts openly.

Faced with his inadequacy during a moment of wobble as he prepared to teach a unit on Transcendentalism, Grant took a brave step and shared his concerns with students.

Wobble and Courage as Response to Uncertainty

Grant recognized that most of the content he was given to teach was new to him, and he could not become an 'expert' on any of the content before he was to teach it on his own. When describing his preparation for a unit on Transcendentalism, Grant told Author A, "I don't know if I grasped the transcendentalists." With this realization and a pedagogical conviction that being honest with students was vital, Grant looked to them for support, saying, "We are going to learn the transcendentalists together." Here, we saw Grant *negotiating* the complexities of *students* and *curriculum*. He was trying to figure out how best to proceed with this unit and serve the students despite the gaps in his content knowledge and the constraints of the school-mandated curriculum. In Grant's uncertainty and unwillingness to admit such to his peers, he found a kinship with his students that was not present with his fellow teachers. He found this risk fruitful and excitedly told Author A, "I assigned reading. I read too, and then we debated free speech and self-reliance". Grant used the connections he fostered with his students to help him learn content and understand how he and they might make sense of ideas and concepts dialogically.

Grant did not enter this moment of uncertainty expecting it to be as productive a learning outcome as it turned out. As he discussed this lesson with Author A during an interview, Grant said he believed the students learned more than he "expected because I was honest enough to tell them I didn't know enough to stand in front of them and lecture." Further, Grant told Author A that he thought it would be helpful to admit to his students that he was learning from the same starting point. Through the process of preparing for and implementing an in-class debate activity, the learning that came out of this moment of uncertainty became productive for him as a teacher. Grant recognized that his relationship the curriculum was helpful for planning. While he admitted that his planning was guided by "thinking about how [he] would learn," Grant told Author A that he realized "that not all students are like me." He realized he would need to choose "texts and assignments that [were] relevant to my students' learning goals." Entering into dialogue with his students and seeing them as sources of knowledge about how to approach content helped Grant

create a healthy tension between the norms of PCHS, the needs and interests of his students, and how he saw himself as a teacher—someone who could create connections with the curriculum for himself and *with* the students in his classroom.

Finding Help through Change

During moments of wobble, a new perspective can lead to productive changes in how one understands the context in which one transacts (Fecho et al., 2004). Novice teachers feeling isolated from their peers, like Grant, have little hope of finding another perspective that might help them wrest new meaning from their contexts—new ways to respond to that which causes wobble. In the third interview with Author A, Grant acknowledged that during the school year, he sought ideas about new ways that students might represent their thinking outside of a traditional essay. For example, he told Author A that he was trying to make citing textual evidence, analyzing themes, and explaining story development meaningful to students. In that conversation, he asked, "Why do we tie those skills to essay writing, especially when so many students inherently struggle to get their thoughts across in that way?" Grant's efforts to think creatively about ways students can represent their thinking in multiple modalities matched his desire as a teacher to connect content to his students' lives and literacy practices in relevant ways. This was a question that Grant asked his peers, but he never received a response that resolved his curiosity, which led to an awareness that something was out of balance. Wobble was afoot.

Midway through the second semester, the outside-of-the-classroom tension Grant was experiencing reached a crescendo. One particularly tension-filled day began with a colleague asking Grant if he had discussed the American Dream theme in *The Great Gatsby* as required per the district curriculum. He had not and had already begun moving on to the next unit. He cobbled together a lecture and assignment to fulfill the district requirement while still being aware of his goal to provide students with multiple modalities through which they might demonstrate their learning. Author A was present for this lesson and recorded in his observation narrative a moment when Grant recognized the value of his students' perspective in his learning process:

> After Grant lectured about the concept of the American Dream, he planned to show part of the movie *The Great Gatsby* and then have students identify how the concept of the American Dream is represented in the movie. The video was not working. After several minutes, he still could not get the video to show up on the screen with audio, and Grant was visibly frustrated…. He improvised. He told the class to use their social media savvy to find memes, videos, tweets, etc., representing a particular character from *The Great Gatsby*.

In the wobble-inducing moment, all of the tension from outside the classroom (failure to have hit a district requirement related to the theme) met inside the classroom in the form of a video not working correctly. While his response was to give his students an assignment to get them busy

while he could work out the technical problems, what ended up happening was a moment where his students' response to the assignment pulled his thoughts away from the tensions he was experiencing and toward an understanding of what was happening in his classroom. He saw his students take the framework of an idea and run with it, and in doing so, Grant had a lightbulb moment—he understood his students' sense-making processes through the pictorial texts they created. About this experience, Grant said, "By the end of the class period, I had dozens of memes from students." He elaborated that this assignment caused him to "rethink the medium through which students present" their ideas. He remarked that he "found it a major paradigm shift in [his] teaching." Here, we see Grant engaging in *negotiation* with *self* that occurred as a moment of wobble helped Grant learn from students' actions and success with the task. The experience offered a new perspective that allowed Grant to respond to his frustration with writing-focused assessment and renewed his commitment to multi-modalities for students to express their knowledge.

We see this as a dialogic transaction with the students that allowed Grant to refigure how he understood the teacher/student dynamic. Grant explained in an interview that after this meme assignment, some students discussed other assignments with him, offering suggestions for incorporating their interests and sense-making. Of one such instance, Grant said:

> I saw relevance in the assignment for me and not necessarily for the students. When the students came to me to discuss it, I modified the assignment with them so they could relate to and benefit from it.

We see Grant *negotiating* with *students* and *self* because he recognizes that students can be key contributors to his development as a teacher when he engages in dialogue with their thoughts and actions. As a novice teacher, Grant discovered he could not count on regular feedback from his peers. Moreover, the feedback he received needed to align with his conceptions of good teaching. However, by acknowledging his uncertainty at times and paying attention to moments that shook his confidence, Grant found that his students could guide him through moments of wobble. These moments, which many teachers may not notice at all or may dismiss as an abnormality, provided Grant confidence that he can reconcile tensions dialogically with his students by seeing them as critical sources of knowledge (Stewart & McClure, 2013).

Embracing wobble helped Grant learn to pay attention to his students, to learn from them, and to be shaped by them. In doing so, students served as a barometer that provided feedback in the moment. Grant was learning to read them and understand how to pivot or make transitions to maintain learning momentum. Later in the semester, Grant was covering the required material when he realized he was losing his students' attention. Author A documented this moment in an observation narrative:

> Grant recognized that the class was distracted and drew them back in. He was successful in doing this, and it helped the rest of the class to work more smoothly. Again, he pivots when necessary…He started to deliver the lecture the way most would expect him to, but he changed how he delivered it when he needed to based on how he perceived the students' attention.

Over time, Grant became more attuned to his students, which showed how he could make swift changes to keep their focus.

Grant stopped asking students to pay attention and improvised and created ways for students to interact with ideas and concepts collaboratively. He was seeking active connections and productive transactions. In these moments, students' learning developed in ways that Grant did not anticipate. He told Author A that reflecting on these moments with his students "inspired other creative activities I have used since that time." Reflection helped him learn to pivot and improvise, making him a more confident, less frustrated teacher. When Grant sought help to learn how to teach and develop into a particular kind of teacher, he found that help in his students. In this way, teaching and learning became a dialogic process of mutual shaping.

Discussion

Grant's story highlights the roles of school leaders, teacher educators, and students in supporting novice teachers. The pressure to fit in and learn was placed squarely on Grant's shoulders: He was expected to figure out the established culture of the school and department, while also learning how to teach new materials, interact with students, and balance his expectations with the unclear expectations of his school and peers. Teacher education and teaching induction programs should support novice teachers so they can respond to the challenges they encounter in their own way.

School Leaders

The induction process for new teachers varies by context, with many factors contributing to a process' effectiveness. Given our focus on the importance of context, it should be no surprise that we offer the reminder that no induction method works universally. Moreover, while mentorships are shown to provide support to novice teachers, their effectiveness needs to be clarified. The role of a mentor also varies by context, so the protocols for being a mentor and the relationship between a mentor and a new teacher should be clear but flexible. Grant's experiences and those of many other teachers (e.g., Stewart, 2012) demonstrate that teachers struggle to respond to challenges in their own ways when school policies and pacing guides function as authoritative discourses that demand that teachers conform their practices to the norms of the school. These policies and the lack of dialogue require teachers to choose sides: the policies or their pedagogical beliefs. Rather than forcing new teachers to conform, we argue that induction

programs should be structured in ways that create conditions for bringing competing perspectives into dialogue with one another. We encourage school leaders to set up programs that train mentors to be effective coaches who clearly communicate and create protocols for open discussion about school norms, policies, and curriculum.

Teacher Education

Teacher educators (and we are talking to our tribe here, with full recognition that we need to do better as well) must find ways to help TCs learn to grow comfortable with imperfection. We must help TCs understand that they will not be fully formed just because they have walked across the stage and into their classrooms. We have to help them see that Grant's experiences of feeling isolated, being unsure of how to proceed when questions arose, and even seeming to be lost at times when trying to navigate all the discourses of a new school are normal and not something to hide or be ashamed of. These feelings should be discussed as normal learning processes with TCs as they learn to teach. Grant stumbled into the realization that his students were a source of knowledge that could help him through his struggles, but this does not have to be the case. Teacher education would do well to prepare novice teachers to see students as a source of knowledge (Stewart & McClure, 2013). There must be space in the teacher education curriculum to raise this idea. In addition, class time should be dedicated to engaging in exercises where TCs take notes in the field, look at interactions with students, and workshop how those students can be teaching THEM something.

Novice Teachers

We invite novice teachers to see Grant as a model, not a cautionary tale. In particular, there are three things that Grant learned to do by holding fast to his pedagogical beliefs, even if it was through trial and error:

1) Shift from a deficit view that may unconsciously affect how you look at students to try to consciously see them as sources of knowledge. Grant was unafraid to admit he did not know things and ask his students for help.
2) Incorporate activities where students have the agency to make sense of ideas in unique ways. Grant did this by having students use their knowledge of and connection to social media as a source for an in-class assignment. Please pay attention to their strengths and offer them chances to learn and demonstrate learning in modalities they enjoy.
3) Regularly reflect on what you are seeing from your students and how that is changing how you teach them. Pay particular attention to how you see students responding to your instruction versus your expectations for their response and work to reconcile the difference.

Conclusion

Moments of struggle and uncertainty do not have to be debilitating for new teachers. However, the expectation that novice teachers know it all or can figure things out certainly can be. Teachers need support if we want to alter teacher attrition rates or finally address the historic challenge of isolation in the teaching profession. The meaningful changes that flowed from Grant's willingness to embrace wobble might not have happened if he was not open to reflecting on his struggles and the value of his students' perspectives for his learning and development.

School leaders and teacher educators must provide ample resources for novice teachers as they transition to full-time teaching. School induction processes should be developed with an explicit focus on coaching and reflection for mentors and mentees. These processes should be clear while leaving room to respond to the nuance of context. Teacher educators should prepare TCs to recognize students as sources of knowledge, supporting and building guided discussions into methods courses where TCs draw upon field experiences to recognize what they learn from students. Field experience seminars in teacher education programs present key opportunities for faculty to lead TCs in exploring challenges encountered through problem-posing discussions (Stewart, 2018) that can help novice teachers recognize the value of struggle and uncertainty. These activities during teacher preparation can help TCs and novice teachers recognize strengths and weaknesses while developing habits of mind that will prepare them to seek support from others when they struggle instead of continuing to falter under the burden of isolation.

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Overview

The Journal for Excellence in College Teaching and Learning is a peer-reviewed electronic Journal sponsored by the Kentucky Council for Post-Secondary Education Faculty Development Group. General categories for articles include theory, research, and practice. In addition, the Journal will publish manuscripts containing media reviews, profiles, and commentary. The Journal initially targets the professional development of college and university faculty. Its primary goal is to enhance student learning by promoting excellence in teaching in higher education institutions in Kentucky and beyond.

Submission of Guidelines for Research, Theory, and Practice Papers, respectively

1. Submit original manuscripts as MS Word documents to the Journal website.
2. Use APA style when preparing the manuscript. Please refer to the American Psychological Association Manual of Style, Sixth Edition.
3. Include an abstract of 200 - 250 words for research, theory, and practice.
4. Use one-inch margins and double-space your text.
5. The length of your manuscript should be between 3,000 – 5,000 words in Times New Roman, 12-point font.
6. Use a minimum of tables. Provide image-ready tables, figures, graphs, and charts on separate pages. Include only essential data in the tables, figures, graphs, and charts. Combine tables whenever possible.
7. Do not include the author's name(s), positions, titles, or places of employment on the cover page to safeguard anonymity.
8. Do not use generic masculine pronouns or other sexist terminology in your manuscript.

Peer-reviewers read and recommend articles for publication under the research, theory, and practice categories. Articles published in the Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning, reflect the views of the authors and not of the Editors, Editorial Board, or Eastern Kentucky University.

Submission Guidelines for Media Review, Profile, and Commentary

1. Submit original manuscripts as MS Word documents to the Journal website.
2. Use APA style when preparing the manuscript. Please refer to the American Psychological Association Manual of Style, Sixth Edition.
3. Include an abstract of 120 words.
4. Double-space your manuscript and insert one-inch margins.
5. The length of your manuscript should be 2,000 to 3,000 words in Times New Roman, 12-point font.
6. Use a minimum of tables. Type tables on separate pages. Include only essential data in the tables. Combine tables whenever possible.
7. Do not include author's name(s), positions, titles, or places of employment on the cover page to safeguard anonymity.
8. Do not use generic masculine pronouns or other sexist terminology in your manuscript.

The editors review papers in the media, profile, and commentary categories. Articles published in the Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning reflect the views of the authors, not those of the editors, editorial board, or Eastern Kentucky University.

Brief Notes on Categories

Research
Educational research is a process of discovery that may or may not use the scientific method. There are limitations in the scientific method and other types of research methodology. The researcher recognizes and defines a problem, formulates a hypothesis, collects data, analyzes the data, and then provides a statement of conclusion that may or may not confirm the hypothesis.

Theory
Theory is a tested and testable concept that explains an occurrence. Researchers may analyze existing theories or apply them to contemporary situations. Sometimes researchers develop new interpretations to existing theories. A theory paper involves a lot of critical thinking, reading, and reflection.

Practice
Practice involves almost everything teachers do relative to their profession. Teachers continuously try out new concepts and ideas, and reflect on "best practices." They usually share their successes with colleagues in the profession.

Media Review
We live in an era of information overload and teachers play the role of sorting out and managing the material they intend to use in their classrooms. Media reviews contain reports, demonstrations, and/or critiques of print or electronic resources that enhance or facilitate teaching and learning.

Profile
A profile is a feature story of a person that highlights the person's background, ideas, and accomplishments. Profiles describe qualities that are worthy of emulation.

Commentary
A commentary is a piece of writing that gives a perspective on an occurrence or event. It may clarify, explain, or illustrate issues related to the title.

The Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning

Mission

The Journal targets the professional development of college/university faculty in the Commonwealth of Kentucky and beyond. We also welcome submissions from faculty in the United States and overseas.

Goals

1. To adapt "best practices" to new teaching and learning contexts.
2. To promote innovative research in the scholarship of teaching.
3. To provide a forum for sharing successful teaching/learning strategies.
4. To profile individuals who exhibit excellence in teaching.
5. To stimulate ongoing professional development through teaching/learning resources.

Submissions

Articles must represent innovation in teaching and learning in higher education. Articles must be submitted exclusively to the Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning. Manuscripts must be double-spaced with one-inch margins, paragraphs indented five spaces, pages clearly numbered, 12-point Times New Roman font, and should use the most current edition of The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Upload an electronic copy to the Journal website.

Journal Content

The Journal will address innovative and practical teaching resources for faculty. It will also publish informative articles relating to the profession on topics such as:

- "Best practices"
- Innovative environments
- Collaborative practices
- Instructional technology
- Creative pedagogical approaches
- Student retention
- Diversity within the teaching/learning environment
- Creative and innovative teaching tips
- Successful teaching/learning practices
- Profiles of honorary award recipients
- Book and media reviews
- Professional meetings, workshops, conferences and resources

Publication Information

This peer-reviewed electronic Journal was initially sponsored by the Faculty Development Workgroup/Council on Postsecondary Education and is published by the College of Education and Applied Human Sciences, Eastern Kentucky University. Reviewers represent faculty from public and private institutions of higher education all over Kentucky and beyond.

In This Issue

Ann Burns / Eastern Kentucky University
Senior Editor for The Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning

The Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning (JECTL) has a new name. The former Kentucky Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning has been renamed the Journal of Excellence in College Teaching and Learning. As our journal's reach has grown due to improvements in electronic submissions, we felt eliminating the "Kentucky" from the journal name was more indicative of our far reaching scope and range of submissions. We are pleased to present a wide-ranging mix of research articles in this issue of our journal. The submissions are both timely and thought provoking for scholars and practitioners alike across multiple fields in higher education.

Multiple manuscripts have a focus on education implications related to student success, note these articles address student support:

> *Technology in the Classroom Twitter as a Tool for Student Engagement,* Sara Runge, EdD, Associate Professor, Northern Kentucky University and Kimberly Clayton-Code, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Northern Kentucky University.
> *Impact of COVID-19 on Asynchronous Learning*, Paul Tontz, Ph.D. Assistant Teaching Professor, Higher Education and Student Affairs, University of Southern Mississippi, Jenna Reyes, Ed.D., RN, Assistant Professor, Department Chair, MSN Nursing Education, Simulation Coordinator, School of Nursing, Azusa Pacific University, and Alyssa Reyes, B.A., Research Assistant, Biology, California Polytechnic State University.
> *A Pedagogical Activity for Language Exploration*, Ali Yaylali, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, Eastern Kentucky University.
> *Wobble and Transcending the Challenges of Novice Teachers.* Tim Jansky, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Eastern Kentucky University and Trevor Thomas Stewart, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Virginia Tech.

In addition, articles related to diversity of practice and student perceptions of college supports:

> *Winter break is here! Are you taking classes? How on-campus tabling sessions improve student perceptions of Winter Term courses,* James Blair, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, Eastern Kentucky University, Russell Carpenter, Ph.D, Assistant Provost & Professor of English, Eastern Kentucky University, and Cassie Bradley, Program Manager, Faculty Center for Teaching & Learning, Eastern Kentucky University.
> *Advising Postsecondary Students to Success and Retention: The P.A.S.E. Model.* Stephanie Ford, EdD. Assistant Professor Murray State University.

Content related specifically to leadership topics offered this edition are:

> *An Examination of Superintendent Turnover in Kentucky*, Kevin Hub, EdD, Associate Professor, Eastern Kentucky University and Gill Hunter, Ph.D, Professor, Eastern Kentucky University

> *The Evolution of School Leadership in Times of Crisis,* Christopher Butcher, Associate Director, Transfer Advising and Success, Eastern Kentucky University
> Todd McCardle, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Eastern Kentucky University

Finally, a promising practice that should cause each reader to think about collaboration and creative teaching and learning processes:

> *Establishing a Boundaryless Institute of Higher Education through Transcendence*. Sanci Teague, Associate Professor, West Kentucky Community and Technical College and Melissa S. Vermillion, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness Planning and Research, Hazard Community and Technical College

The editorial board would like to acknowledge those who have supported our journal. First, we thank our authors for submitting their work. Second, we wish to express gratitude to our esteemed panel of reviewers. Each manuscript goes through an extensive blind peer review panel, and we are quite proud of the mentoring that has resulted as a part of this process. Third, special thanks to Council on Post Secondary Education (CPE), Eastern Kentucky University's College of Education and Applied Human Sciences, and EKU's Department of Teaching, Learning, and Educational Leadership who continue to support the vision of The Journal of College Teaching and Learning. The support and guidance of the Board throughout the process of publishing this issue has been enormous.